

Northwestern University



on the air

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Christianity After 1948 Years

A radio discussion over WGN and the Mutual Broadcasting System

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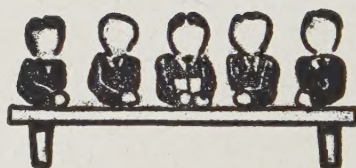
RABBI EDGAR E. SISKIN

North Shore Congregation Israel

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THE REVIEWING STAND is a weekly radio forum presented by Northwestern University. The program was first broadcast by Station WGN, Chicago, October 14, 1934. It has been on the air continuously since that time, originating in the WGN studios, and, since 1935, carried by the stations of the Mutual Broadcasting System. THE REVIEWING STAND presents members of the Northwestern University faculty and distinguished guests from business, government, education, and the press in round table discussions of contemporary problems—the questions that are in the news. The program is under the direction of James H. McBurney, Dean of the School of Speech, Northwestern University; Miss Myrtle Stahl, Director of Educational Programs, WGN, Chicago; R. E. Buchanan, Director of Radio, Northwestern University; Mrs. Kathryn Johnson, Assistant to the Director.

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Christianity After 1948 Years

MR. BUCHANAN: What do you think of Christianity after 1948 years?

DR. COE: In spite of the failures and glaring faults of professing Christians, Christianity, with its assurance that God is the Redeemer of the world and with its emphasis upon the sacredness of personality and the brotherhood of man, is the hope of the world.

REV. McLEOD: Were I pessimistic, I would say that the coming and going of another Christmas has revealed us to be a crassly commercial people who started decorating our main streets on October 1st for the most intensive buying spree in our history.

RABBI SISKIN: That may be and we are all penitent about it, but still Christianity is achievements, and, more important, Christianity is promises, the promise of peace and good will for all nations, races, creeds.

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MR. BUCHANAN: Christmas has many meanings to many people. Some think of it as a gay, spirited holiday season. Others find their greatest joy in talking to their children about Santa Claus and his sleigh-full of glittering gifts. Then there are still others who soberly realize that each Christmas marks another year of Christianity and wonder just what Christianity means to this world, 1948 years after the birth of Christ.

Dr. Coe, you seem to believe that there is great hope in the teachings of spirituality. Do you think this has been borne out in the past year?

DR. COE: Yes, Mr. Buchanan, I think so. I believe we have many evidences. One evidence is in the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam, Holland when 150 denominations of the Protestant world gathered the first and largest assembly since the days of Martin Luther.

MR. BUCHANAN: You, on the other hand, Chaplain McLeod, seem to feel that Christmas is becoming merely a matter of the pocketbook. Has Christmas no other meaning?

REV. McLEOD: You will recall, Mr. Buchanan, that I prefaced it by saying, "If I were a pessimist." Of course, even a casual look to Western Europe or a look at China today and then a glance at how we have enjoyed the horn of plenty leads one to feel a little bit pessimistic about the way in which we celebrate Christmas. But, actually, of course, I would say, "Amen," to the statements of both Dr. Coe and Rabbi Siskin.

MR. BUCHANAN: Rabbi Siskin, you speak of the relation of religion to fair treatment of all, regardless of race, religion, or creed, or color. Can you find justification for that statement after the events of the last year?

RABBI SISKIN: Not as much justification as I should like to find. On the other hand, I have faith that it is only through the translation into life of the preachments of the Prophets of Israel and the Sermon on the Mount that we can achieve that kind of cooperation in the world and those relation-

ships among men which will lead us to the redemption and good will which are instinct with the true Christian spirit.

MR. BUCHANAN: We have progressed nearly 2,000 years along this road of Christianity. What do you think, Dr. Coe, is the greatest need in religion today?

DR. COE: Mr. Buchanan, I think the greatest need in religion today and in Christianity in particular is what Nicholas Berdyaev called a "new spirituality." In other words, our spirituality was born in a very simple world, and now the world is greatly complicated by the advance of science and by the movement of the masses. We are not prepared for a world like this. The tendency is to de-spiritualize when we need more spirituality.

MR. BUCHANAN: Is this dependent at all upon theology and the reading of the Bible? Do you think we are getting away from what used to be the "old-day" teachings?

DR. COE: It depends much upon that. I would say that our lack of spirituality may be caused by, perhaps, our emphasis upon power. We are a power-driven people, and furthermore I think there are some substitutes that we make for religion—education, for instance. Education is wonderful, but education does not always bring wisdom. Yes, I believe that we need some new emphasis, a new literacy, we might call it, in the general field of religious thinking.

RABBI SISKIN: I would agree with you, Dr. Coe, that there is a great need for spirituality in the world and among men. This spirituality should lead above all things into the realm of action. We need religion in action—the kind of action which makes itself felt in just and righteous economic and industrial relations, in fair relations between management and labor, in peaceful international relations, in equitable race relations, and in mature interpersonal relations—the spirituality which leads to a religious interpretation and direction of life. That is, I believe, our great need.

REV. McLEOD: I think that there is a tragic illiteracy prevalent in the world. Education has not been the complete answer. We are still illiterate in the field of religion, and we can't very well translate into action until we get to the heart of religion and are capable of understanding its precepts and its principles. Actually religion does not change basically; fundamental religion does not change. It is true that the theology, the interpretation will change from day to day, but I think one of the tragic spectacles of our world is our religious illiteracy.

MR. BUCHANAN: Do you think that is true of the youth you deal with at the University, Chaplain McLeod?

REV. McLEOD: Tragically true! The average young person arriving at a university or college campus is quite mature in things social, economic, political. He is 18 or 19 years old in those areas. But religiously, spiritually he is an infant.

MR. BUCHANAN: Dr. Coe, in your trip to Europe this summer did you find that true of European youth?

DR. COE: With all the limitations of Europe the youth seems to be more alert in the study of the Bible and in general spiritual fields than many of our young people in this country. We have brilliant young people in our country, but sometimes we find them painfully lacking in comprehension of spiritual values.

MR. BUCHANAN: Now that we have looked at this religion in its broad aspects, I would like to know what has happened in the last year that you think most important to religion.

REV. McLEOD: Certainly one of the things that stands out in my mind, particularly because of the significant time when it came—the first week of Lent—was the death of Gandhi, great man that he was, whose death shocked not only the Christian world but the non-Christian world. We should recognize his significant contribution and the stature of the man, for certainly that little brown man stood alongside of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Stalin, Hitler, Churchill, all his contemporaries. The seventy-eight years of his life have a significant and important meaning in the progress of one of the greatest and most thickly-populated areas of the world.

MR. BUCHANAN: It seems to me if you pick that out as a significant event that we are transcending certain concepts of the theologian's view of Christianity. Rabbi Siskin, what does Christianity encompass?

RABBI SISKIN: As I see it, Christianity is an interpretation of a God-centered view of life, and I think that more and more we are coming to a recognition that, while religions may be many, religion is one, and that there are certain fundamental trends, certain great basic doctrines in all the religions of the Western World, and certainly in the religion of a man like Gandhi, which lead to a unified view of the universe, a God-centered view of the universe.

MR. BUCHANAN: What would you pick as one of the leading events of this past year that has affected religion?

RABBI SISKIN: As a Jew, as an American, and as a citizen of the world—I think of the creation of the state of Israel because I believe that the creation of the state of Israel will have beneficial consequences not only for the Jewish people but for the world at large. This past year has been the 1776 of the Jewish people; the Jews in Palestine have just come through their Valley Forge. For many reasons the creation of the state of Israel is going to be a great boon for people of the Jewish faith. It will provide a haven of refuge for the Jews of Europe. After six million of my brothers perished in Nazi death camps, the few hundred thousand that remain are going to find that in Palestine they can discover that rebirth of freedom which is their rightful heritage as children of the One God.

MR. BUCHANAN: Chaplain McLeod, what do other religions think of the creation of the state of Israel?

REV. McLEOD: I think in the main that the Christian world looks toward Israel and sees there a hope for the achievement of the very ideal which Rabbi Siskin has expressed.

RABBI SISKIN: Spiritual values are going to form a very important part of the future state of Israel. In Palestine a cooperative life has been achieved which is probably unique among the nations of the world today. I believe also that there is going to be a great flowering of the religious spirit in the new state of Israel. And in this connection I should like to emphasize that the shrines in Israel which the three great faiths, Christianity, Mohammedanism, and Judaism hold sacred will be respected and safeguarded by the custodians of the new state.

MR. BUCHANAN: I suppose also we might mention the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, which you attended, Dr. Coe, as one of the more important events of the past year.

DR. COE: Yes, that is also one of the marks of progress. I think we might note other marks of progress. One of them is the establishment of the United Church in Southern India, where the Presbyterian Church, the Congregational, the Wesleyan, and the Church of England united in what is called the United Church of South India. Furthermore, I believe another great advance has been made within the last few weeks when the legal authorities in India voted to do away forever with the legal classification of the untouchables. That means sixty million untouchables in India are no longer untouchable. They may now drink from the community fountain and have privileges others have had. It is a great mark of progress. I believe Christianity has made some impact upon India with the result that we have freedom for the untouchable group.

MR. BUCHANAN: What about this First Assembly. How was it made possible?

DR. COE: The First Assembly was made possible by the spread of the missionary movement of Christianity. That was the credit given by Dr. Mackay of Princeton University in the opening address at Amsterdam. He said, "We owe to the missionary movement of the last 150 years the fact that we are meeting in Amsterdam here today."

MR. BUCHANAN: What do you think about the Bill of Rights, if I may suggest one of the recent events that is significant?

REV. McLEOD: I think one of the most helpful things in the past year has been our recognition of the fact that there are citizens of our country who have been disqualified. Actually one of the most helpful signs is revealed in the voting of 1944 when 200,000 Negroes in the South voted, in 1946 when 600,000 Negroes voted, and in 1948 when more than 800,000 Negroes voted.

MR. BUCHANAN: Are there other events along that line?

RABBI SISKIN: As a Yale man, I should like to feel that the election of Levi Jackson as captain of the Yale football team is a symbol to Negro young people that Negroes in all avenues of our national life can attain positions which just a few years ago were held to be quite beyond their reach.

REV. McLEOD: I would think it would be too bad in view of the fact

that this is a loaded gathering, since all three of the participants are from Yale, not to mention the fact that Harvard this year also elected a Negro as manager of its football team.

DR. COE: I think we should also give credit to the young people who are willing to help us solve this problem. For example, a fraternity at Amherst College has defied the national fraternity and voted to admit a Negro to its membership. And also the Brooklyn Dodgers have Jackie Robinson, the Cleveland Indians have Dobey. And it seems to me the youth of the world is helping to solve these problems.

RABBI SISKIN: Perhaps a new light is dawning for some of the untouchables of our own country, and the chances were never brighter than in the coming session of Congress for the enactment of anti-lynching legislation, an anti-poll tax law, and a federal fair employment practices act. The forces making for unfair treatment of minorities in this country are becoming increasingly isolated and are, I believe, coming to discover that some of their spokesmen represent none but themselves.

MR. BUCHANAN: Our list is certainly growing. Is there anything else you would like to mention, Chaplain McLeod?

REV. McLEOD: Very definitely, and I am sorry to bring in this note of pessimism. But once again, from January 1st to December 1st there has been nothing but a deterioration of our relationships with the Soviet Union. It is a discouraging fact that today we find our world still in a state of jitters, largely because of the failure on the part of both to arrive at a common place of understanding.

MR. BUCHANAN: Did you find these jitters, too, in Europe, Dr. Coe?

DR. COE: Very much so. I don't know whether it is so much jitters for or against any one country, but in Czechoslovakia where I was a visitor this summer, I found the people greatly distressed because they didn't seem to find it possible to trust our West. For example, they said, "You failed us at Munich and then later we wanted the Americans to liberate us, but you had agreed at Yalta that the Russians were to liberate us. We don't want Russia," they said, "but you are everlastingly throwing us at the feet of the people over here we don't want."

I think we have to answer for that. There is poverty in Czechoslovakia and there is uncertainty in Czechoslovakia. The same is true in Poland. Nobody there seemingly wants to be Communist. But the people are hungry; they will vote for anybody who will give them a round meal.

MR. BUCHANAN: What part can Christianity play in a situation like that?

DR. COE: Christianity can give a demonstration of its belief in brotherhood by doing everything it can to help feed these people. Furthermore, and more important to me, we can give them some spiritual food. In other words, we need to send our spiritual leaders to those people to show them what religion really means.

REV. McLEOD: But what of the Marshall Plan? Is that not sufficient?

DR. COE: The Marshall Plan, as I saw it work out in Europe, has been a wonderful force for good. I was personally thanked for the Marshall Plan. I asked why in the world these people would thank me. They said, "We must thank somebody." It is a boon to Europe. But that is not the only good thing that we can do.

RABBI SISKIN: Don't you think, Dr. Coe and Chaplain McLeod, that the greatest service we can render the peoples of Europe is to underscore the need for peace? Peace is the need of man, and peace the only hope of man. Professor Blackett, recent winner of the Nobel Prize in physics, has written a book in which he points out that the next war, if there is a war, is not going to be a quick push button affair. It will be a prolonged holocaust in which the spiritual values which we Christians and Jews stand for are going to be undermined and perhaps destroyed. What we need more than anything else for the people of Europe, as indeed for ourselves, is an understanding of the horror of atomic war and the inescapable necessity of peace.

REV. McLEOD: As one person has well said, "The atom bomb is here to stay. The big question is whether or not we are." I would hope that the time could arrive when there could be some international agreement on the use of this terrific means of destruction. This which could be a boon and a help to mankind seems to now fall upon us as something which can only be a medium of destruction.

MR. BUCHANAN: What does Christianity do in the atomic age, Dr. Coe? Do you think it is going to waver?

DR. COE: No, no, Mr. Buchanan! We have placed our dependence upon certain things, for example, education. One of the great men of England not long ago said, "Never before have we been so incredibly well-informed and yet so vastly lacking in wisdom." We haven't the wisdom. We must realize that we cannot save this world by science. Science ultimately destroys unless there is character enough to control. We cannot save the world by education. The world is to be saved by an emphasis upon spiritual powers and the church as the great agency for the emphasis upon those spiritual powers. I believe that a new spirituality and a new devotion to our religious principles and to our churches and synagogues is absolutely necessary if this world is to be saved.

REV. McLEOD: Once again I appear to be the one who enters with the note of pessimism, but I think it has been of great concern to the Christian forces in this country that, for the first time in the history of the United States of America, we have peacetime conscription. And I am quite sure it is only because of the intensive opposition on the part of churches and synagogues that we did not have complete universal military training.

RABBI SISKIN: I stand in hearty agreement with you, Chaplain McLeod, and I think we have to continue our efforts in that direction by pointing out that there is a great fallacy in thinking that we can escape the consequences of the international conflicts by amassing armaments or by conscripting our

young men. The way out is the way to peace. And no effort can be spared in exploring the avenues which will lead to understanding with other nations of the world.

MR. BUCHANAN: What of the argument which goes, "All right, we go along, we believe that in our country, but take another country which doesn't believe in religion? How are we going to deal with them?"

DR. COE: When we mention specific evils, and indeed they are evils, we are on the periphery of things. I am searching, and I believe you are, to get down to the roots. The roots are in the realm of the spirit. We have too long depended upon the superficial remedies. Now, then, we should get down to spiritual values, have more literacy in our religion. Most of our people professing religion think of it as something just to be kind. Religion is deeper than that. We have to understand the meaning of God. We have to understand the meaning of sin and salvation. In other words, we have to get to the roots. Then problems that arise out of an illiteracy will have a chance to dissipate.

MR. BUCHANAN: How are we to get to the Russians behind the Iron Curtain? How are we to let them know these things?

REV. McLEOD: Of course, you have asked the \$64 question. I don't know the answer. If I did I am sure I would be called to the Reviewing Stand of the nations. But I am sure of this: We cannot afford even at this moment—even though they have dropped an Iron Curtain between us and them—to close the door. I think the door must remain open even though the Russian representative continues to apparently stymie and stop everything that we would consider in the direction of peace and good will in the world.

MR. BUCHANAN: We have mentioned two things in passing that we haven't really discussed: the law in India which eliminates the untouchables, and the establishment of the United Church in Southern India. What significance do they have in the picture?

DR. COE: The United Church of South India gives us a suggestion that we can hope ultimately to have a union of the many divisions of the 57 varieties of Protestantism. One of our great weaknesses in the Christian world is that we are so divided. Now I think it is very significant as it points the way toward the union of further churches.

RABBI SISKIN: Dr. Coe, would you say that there is any relationship between these advances in the realm of religion and the withdrawal of Britain from its traditional role as protector of India?

DR. COE: I think so. I was opposed to the British power in India. I was opposed to that part of the empire. I think, however, you have to say in justice to Britain that, if anybody was going to have an empire, Britain was probably as fair and as kind as any country could be. I would like to know what India would be if Stalin had power there. It is better for India to be free of any country. She contains proud people of 5,000 years history, and now that she has an opportunity, she will grow.

MR. BUCHANAN: We have talked about the past. With those things in mind what do you see in the immediate future, Chaplain McLeod?

REV. McLEOD: Of course there is a note of hope in the resurgence of faith and a tendency in our own country toward inter-denominational co-operation. I am sure all of us are grateful for the work which has been done by the National Council of Christians and Jews for the improvement of understanding between Jews and Christians. It is not completely a pessimistic outlook which we face. I am sure that, even if we tried, we could not stop the spirit of Jesus Christ from operating in the hearts of men.

RABBI SISKIN: I believe that there is a spiritual ferment at work in the world today. In spite of all the setbacks which we seem to be experiencing from day to day, we can yet see that men are seeking freedom. They are seeking to throw off their chains, they are bestirring themselves, and they are reaching toward the goal of peace and good will with all men.

DR. COE: We cannot longer depend upon science. We cannot longer depend upon politics. We must depend upon the things of the spirit.

MR. BUCHANAN: Your individual views of Christmas and Christianity, gentlemen, seem to fit well with the views of millions of people who have great hopes for a better world and a lasting peace.

As you have indicated, though, Christianity must stand upon more than just hope. We must provide a foundation for that belief, an active participation if we are to move toward this goal of a better world.

This Christmas, it seems to me, as we do each other year, we might all remember those glorious words, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."





Suggested Readings

Compiled by the Reference Department,
Deering Library,
Northwestern University.



CRAIG, SAMUEL G. *Christianity, Rightly So Called*. Philadelphia, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1946.

The aim of this book is to distinguish between Christianity and its counterfeits.

EAKIN, FRANK and EAKIN, MILDRED. *Let's Think About Our Religion*. New York, Macmillan, 1944.

The meaning and place of faith in modern life.

LATOURETTE, KENNETH SCOTT. *The Christian Outlook*. New York, Harper, 1948.

Surveys the present status of the Christian Church with the purpose of prophesying its role in the future.

LATOURETTE, KENNETH SCOTT, ed. *The Gospel, the Church, and the World*. New York, Harper, 1947.

The meaning of the Christian Gospel, the relation of the Gospel and the Church to society, and suggestions for making the Gospel and the Church more relevant in human affairs.

LEIPER, HENRY SMITH, ed. *Christianity Today; a Survey of the State of the Churches*. New York, Morehouse-Gorham, Inc., 1947.

First-hand reports from 42 nations or areas on the state of the Christian Church.

McSORLEY, JOSEPH. *An Outline History of the Church by Centuries*. St. Louis, B. Herder Book Company, 1943.

Survey of the Roman Catholic Church from St. Peter to Pius XII.

Hibbert Journal. 45:289-303, Jl., '47. "Birth of the Christian Religion." Extracts from *La Naissance du Christianisme*. A. Loisy.

Extracts and summary of this fine work on the birth of Christianity.

Christian Century. 65:1043-7, O, 6, '48. "Universal Church in God's Design; Amsterdam Report."

Summary of resolutions and Christian beliefs brought out in the Amsterdam World Assembly of Churches.

Social Research. 14:267-84, S., '47. "Toynbee and the Decline of Western Civilization." T. A. Sumberg.

Mr. Sumberg credits Toynbee with the theory that Western Christian

civilization can save itself by a rejuvenation of a Christianity free from the control of secular governments.



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List of discussions available on request.*

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